



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

S

l. b.
130.

1. 6. 130.

Mr. *Brown's*

S E R M O N

On the DEATH of

Dr. *Mayhew.*

1. 1881

A
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE
West Church in Boston,

August 24. 1766.

Six Weeks after the DEATH
OF
The Reverend Dr. *MAYHEW.*

BY
JOHN BROWNE, A. M.

Pastor of the Second Church in *Hingham.*

The Lord reigneth.

King DAVID.

*None can stay his Hand, or say unto Him, What
dost Thou ?*

Prophet DANIEL.

B O S T O N :

Printed by R. and S. Draper, in Newbury-street ;
Edes and Gill, in Queen-street, and T. and J. Fleet
in Cornhill, 1766.





ROMANS XI. 33.

---- *And his ways past finding out.*



TH A T the Supreme Being rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and performeth all things according to the council of his own will, agreeable to the unerring rules of wisdom and righteousness, I presume we all believe : But vain man would be wise, too prone to aspire after an intelligence of those things which are beyond his reach. It is the observation of the wisest of men, that it is the glory of God to conceal a thing ; the reasons of some of his decrees, and of his judgments are secreted from men. It is plain that some administrations of divine providence are unsearchable, the reasons that influence an infinite mind are unknown, insomuch that many of the ways of God seem so contradictory to the wisdom of man, that some are almost ready to doubt whether they are the result of divine discretion.

Among

Among the operations of God there appears nothing more shocking and unaccountable to us, than that persons in the vigour of life, endowed by heaven with superior talents, and placed in a sphere of life where they are uncommonly serviceable to mankind, should have a period put to their present existence.

A very affecting instance of this sort we all perceive in the death of Dr. MAYHEW; and I could think of no subject more proper for the employment of our meditations this afternoon, than that which I have chosen. In the handling of which I propose by divine assistance briefly to suggest in the most humble, reverential strains, the probable reasons why any of the ways of God are past finding out.

And then specify the religious improvement which it is proper for us to make when we are thus exercised in the course of providence.

We are first to consider the probable reasons why any of the ways of God towards men are past finding out. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." Perfection in knowledge is requisite in order to see the wisdom and fitness of all the ways of God. Mankind it is certain are very imperfect as to the extent of their knowledge in this world, and upon

upon diverse accounts it seems best, even to us, that it should be so. It has been well observed, "that the whole extent of human existence must be regarded in order to form proper sentiments of the wisdom of all the steps of providence with respect to mankind. Under the incumbrances that we are subject to in our present imperfect state we are puzzled at those few scenes of the lives of individuals, that fall within the limits of our observation : But could we see from the beginning to the end, and have a full apprehension of the purposes of God, we should be convinced that they often reach from one age to another, directed by steady unerring counsel, and that they will finally be productive of the greatest good." It may therefore be called one reason why the *ways of God are sometimes past our finding out*, because we are ignorant of the ends which the Supreme Being has in view. And this comparative ignorance of our's is necessary, considering our present probationary state. Our faith, hope, and trust in God may with greater propriety be exercised ; and we may wait with patience for the arrival of that glorious period, when his righteousness in every instance shall appear as the light, and his judgment as the noon day.

We may further consider, that the other world into which we are passing has a manifest

nifest relation to this. This world is only accommodated to mankind, considered in the infancy of their being : It is designed by the Creator as introductory to a glorious and unending state of existence : If then the ways of God towards men relate to them, considered in their infinite duration, as we have sufficient reason to believe that they do, we are furnished with a satisfactory reason why some occurrences appear dark and intricate to us. Although life and immortality are so far brought to light by the gospel, as to afford sufficient ground for the exercise of faith and obedience, yet in many respects we see as through a glass darkly, we cannot fully penetrate into futurity, we know but in part, and are therefore incapacitated to observe the harmony of the divine operations.

What better general improvement can we now make of the solemn truth expressed in our text (the reasons of which we have now briefly considered) than to reflect with the greatest satisfaction upon our being subjected to the guidance of that almighty Being who, though he giveth not to man an account of his matters, is nevertheless wise in counsel, and excellent in working ? Such a Being can never mistake our interest, nor will he ever cease from promoting our happiness in every method consistent with the grand and regular plan of his moral government.

ment. When indeed any dispensation of his all-wise providence appears to us unaccountable, and peculiarly interesting, whereby our present glory seems greatly diminished, and our happiness interrupted, we are to exercise a becoming sorrow and concern of mind. This is far from being inconsistent with a proper submission to the righteous providence of God. Insensibility, or a mind unmoved by calamity is more culpable, if possible, than it would be to indulge to immoderate grief. We do well to feel our sufferings and be affected with them. The passions of human nature are useful and beneficial, and sorrow is one of these passions. Religion is not intended to suppress any proper motions of the mind ; or in other words to make us stupid and insensible. On the contrary, it is wisely calculated to regulate our sentiments, to set bounds to our passions, and influence us to a regular course of behaviour. While we are then distressed by any stroke of God's hand, we are to think and speak with the greatest reverence of the wise disposer of all events ; for he does righteously in all that he subjects us to ; he chastens us for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness : And if adversity weans us from too fond an attachment to the world, and it's enjoyments, convinces us of our errors, and influences us to greater diligence

B

in

in the service of God, we shall find it good for us in the end that we have been afflicted.

But that we may have an affecting sense of the subject under consideration, and be influenced to the most particular improvement of it, let us employ our minds a few minutes in considering an instance of God's dealing with us as unsearchable, and as distressing as any one of the kind that we have known, and see how applicable what has now been offered may be to such a dispensation of providence.

The most of us have known a man to whom the former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits was uncommonly liberal as to his natural capacity for discernment of truth. When this person came to years of discretion he applied himself with uncommon diligence to the acquirement of useful knowledge ; devoting himself more especially to that course of study which might render him most serviceable to mankind, by instructing them in the articles of pure and undefiled religion. We have known him settled in the work of the gospel ministry, and by his many excellent compositions, instructing and edifying mankind ; uncommonly intent upon inculcating the faith once delivered to the saints ; a rational and zealous advocate for the cause of truth, which is the cause of God ; manifesting an ardent desire to know, and be established

tablished himself, and instruct others respecting the way to eternal life, not from human but divine authority ; never teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. We have known him to rise in the esteem of the discerning and unprejudiced both at home and abroad. Many men of piety and renown have been fond of a correspondence with him ; and even the most of those persons, who through bigotry or envy once thought unfavourably of him, were disposed latterly to think and speak of him with great respect. Many have been relieved by his alms, and all that knew him were convinced of his benevolence. In short, his exemplary piety and devotion, discernable in many instances, but especially in that profound solemnity and reverence with which he ever addressed the supreme Being ; joined with his fidelity and diligence in every part both of his public and private conduct, rendered his life truly precious and desirable.

Now this person whom God was pleased to continue ministring in this place upwards of nineteen years, he has lately removed by death while in the vigour of life, and in the midst of his usefulness. The great breach made upon his family, his people, this town and the whole country, seems to us irreparable. The decease of no one person in our remembrance has

caused greater dejection of spirit, or more sincere and extensive mourning ; but God's will must be done, and it becomes us to acquiesce in it.

If it should be thought by any to savour of vanity or arrogance in me to be thus particular, respecting the life and death of this servant of the Lord, after my superiors have done greater justice to his character ; or should it be judged too late for a discourse of this nature, since six weeks are passed since the death of Dr. MAYHEW, I have this to say, that the days of my mourning are not yet ended ; so far from it, that length of time rather increases than diminishes my sorrow ; and it will be well if even the succession of years don't afford to survivors, more and more reason to bewail the death of so useful a man. Out of the abundance of my heart my mouth speaketh. The intimate acquaintance contracted in youth, and which I have had the honor to maintain with this great and good man, afforded me very frequent opportunities to observe his faith, virtue, (i. e. courage or valour,) knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity ; while I have been musing on these things the fire burned, and I could not refrain (upon being invited to condole with his bereaved people this day) from uttering in the fear of God the sentiments of my truly sorrowful, and sympathizing

sympathizing heart. I shall add to this, that my sorrow on the account of the death of the Doctor, is increased by my living among an affectionate people who greatly bewail his decease; having in years past done themselves the honor unanimously to choose him to be their pastor.

But to return to my subject. How does this great breach, which a God infinitely wise and righteous has made upon us, afford the most convincing proof that *his ways are past finding out*? Our finite wisdom disposes us to conclude, that it would be best upon the whole for the most useful men, to be continued in this sinful world, so long as they could be any ways serviceable to mankind; and that those should rather first be subjected to death who are old and full of days; or others who in the vigour of life are wrathful, envious, malicious, and uncharitable. But, God's ways are not as our ways, nor his tho'ts as our tho'ts; it becomes us therefore to adore his incomprehensible wisdom, and patiently submit to his righteous will, indulging to these sentiments, "Thou destroyest the hope of man. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Shall a thing formed say to the Creator, why hast thou made me thus?"—With as little reason may the being preserved say, why hast thou ordered my circumstances

stances thus : God has a sovereign right to do what he pleases with his own ; and he is always pleased to do that which is best upon the whole, though we cannot at present fully perceive it. Our duty now is to be still, and know that the Lord he is God, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth ; while the full knowledge of his ways is too wonderful for us : It is high, we cannot attain unto it.

I would pass to observe. That there is light that arises in the midst of darkness ; or rather, great consolation that results from this distressing providence. The true believer in God is hereby convinced of a future state of retribution. He sees this world to be quite an imperfect scene ; wherein the wicked often flourish, and the righteous are sometimes cut off in the midst of their days ; which seeming inequality in the administrations of God, cannot otherwise be adjusted than by having recourse to a future state of recompence.

He has, moreover, this great consolation, that his loss is the gain of his pious friend, who is prematurely subjected to death. A reflection upon his own loss may indeed bow him down with heaviness ; but then the consideration that the soul of his beloved friend is transplanted from earth to heaven, must greatly alleviate his sorrow.

I may

I may here pertinently adopt the sentiments and language of the late excellent Dr. MATTHEW, in his printed discourse on the shortness and vanity of human life, "If you are not ignorant (says he) concerning them that are asleep; if you do not think they are perished; if you fully believe the great doctrines of the gospel, that Christ both died and rose again, and that them also which sleep in Jesus, God will raise up at the last day, as he raised him; then go if you can, and sorrow for your pious departed friends, even as others who have no hope. Go and mourn, because they are taken away from this evil troublesome world! Go and mourn, because they are gone to the paradise of God! Go and grieve, because they, whom you loved so well, are become so happy! Be inconsolable, because they, who once mourned here, are now comforted! Go and weep, because all tears, except those of joy, are wiped forever from their eyes! Make yourselves wretched in this world, because your friends are eternally happy in another!" The words of our blessed Saviour to his mourning friends, who realized his approaching departure from them and from the world, shew that they would have greater cause for joy than sorrow at his advancement to the heavenly happiness; his words to which I here refer are found John 14. 28. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said,

said, I go to the Father ; hereby plainly intimating that they would be governed only by selfish views, having no true regard to him, if they were averse to his passing into a state of everlasting rest and happiness, in the immediate presence of his father and their father, of his God and their God. In like manner, let us be comforted under the death of a beloved disciple of his, who we doubt not has made a happy exchange of worlds ; remembering that the perfection of human life, is rather to be estimated from the improvement than the duration of it ; for wisdom is grey hairs to a man, and an unspotted life is old age.

Considering these things I would earnestly recommend it to the beloved people of this society to be in subjection to the Father of their spirits that they may live, and carefully attend to every thing required of them in this season of their great distress. Be thankful to God that you have so long enjoyed a burning and a shining light. You have been highly favoured of the Lord, remember therefore, that to whomsoever much is given, of him shall the more be required. While your late pastor was not suffered to continue by reason of death, look to God by faith and prayer as the repairer of breaches, who though he has smitten he can heal, though he has torn he can bind up. He can in his providence provide

provide you another pastor after his own heart, who can as your *last* eminently did, feed you with knowledge and understanding. The qualifications proper for you to regard in your choice of another pastor, I need not more particularly mention, as I know your stedfast and laudable disposition to seek for one like-minded with him who now rests from his labours among you. Altho' there is nothing impossible with God, yet it is difficult to conceive how your loss can be fully repaired ; however, consider *unity* as your glory and defence ; you have hitherto been remarkable for this, and it has merited, and procured applause. Let brotherly love continue. Study continually the things that make for peace. Be of a condescending spirit, so far as is reasonable, towards one another. Although some of you may have statedly come from the uttermost parts of the town to hear the wisdom of your late pastor, and may now be ready to think that you may with propriety worship elsewhere, from an apprehension that there is no prospect that your loss can be fully repaired ; yet I beseech you to consider, my Brethren, that if you still strive together for the faith of the gospel, you may unite in one to be set over the Congregation, under whose ministry you may greatly rejoice. But I may not enlarge. May you use your best discretion ! And

C

may

may the Lord bless, and keep you, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace !

May we all be disposed to ascribe glory to God, and pray that every instance of his providence may accomplish it's important end with regard to us ! May we reverence our Maker as a being who is wise in counsel, and excellent in working, against whom none ever hardened himself and prospered ! May we ascribe righteousness to him, and acquiesce in all the dispensations of his providence. Whatever seeming difficulties may occur, let us be free to impute them to our narrow contracted view of things, and be far from ascribing the least injustice to the only-wise God. Let this be our consolation, that altho' we now see but in part, and know but in part, yet that which is in part shall finally be done away.

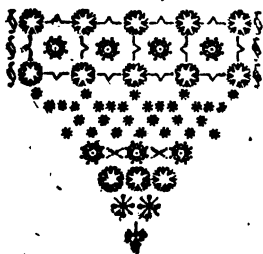
The language used in our text and context, with a brief comment upon it, may properly close the present discourse.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How adorable is that wise and almighty Being, who causes all things to conduce to his glory, insomuch that the severest dispensations of his providence shall finally be productive of the greatest good ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ?

The

The reasons of some of the divine operations among men are vastly beyond our present comprehension. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?* What finite understanding could have either foreseen the methods of his providence, or thought of advising to the pursuit of them? *Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* Who has laid the Almighty under any obligations to shew him his favour? Then, and not till then, may he presume to prescribe to infinite wisdom. *Of him, through him, and to him are all things.* Of him, as the wise contriver, *through him* as the sole director, and *to him* as the ultimate end are all things. *To whom be glory for ever.*

A M E N.



From the public News-Papers.

BOSTON, JULY 14. & 17. 1766.

LAST wednesday morning died here greatly and sincerely lamented, by all who knew him, the Reverend JONATHAN MAYHEW, D. D. Æ. 46, a friend to liberty and learning, a lover of mankind, and a uniform disciple of Jesus Christ.

Soon after he had finished his studies at Cambridge, where he exhibited lively marks of an original genius, he was called in the year 1747, to the pastoral care of the West Church in Boston, which he accepted; promising, like a true Christian, to make the Word of God his only rule of faith and practice, and stedfastly refusing to teach for doctrines the commandments of men.—In this charge he continued 'till his death, loving his people, and by them beloved, explaining with manly fortitude such truths as he found contained in the Bible however discountenanced, esteeming the approbation of his Father in heaven far before the applause of the world, constantly inculcating by his preaching and conduct, the doctrines of Grace, as he thought them delivered by our Saviour and his apostles, and that Religion which is from above, and is full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

In his early productions, his uncommon talents, and generous independency of spirit, are eminently conspicuous: And though, for his declared enmity to every priestly usurpation of authority over the consciences of men, he had very soon to encounter the whole force of enthusiasm and bigotry; yet his
strength

strength of mind, integrity of soul, and unconquerable resolution in his Master's service, supported him under every *temporal* discouragement, and enabled him to triumph over all his adversaries; while his respect for, and observance of, the precepts of the Gospel, at length convinced the world of the sincerity and uprightness of his heart.

His Works already published, will transmit his name to posterity, under the endearing character of a steady and able advocate for religious and civil liberty, and of a firm believer, as well as constant practiser of pure and undefiled religion, as contained in the scriptures; of which, as he left every one to judge for himself, so he always insisted on the same indulgence; never presuming to *force* his doctrines further than their truth and the gospel would carry them.

If at any time, thro' the warmth of his imagination, his earnestness in the cause of religion and truth, and his fixed aversion to establishments of men in the Church of Christ, he may, in some few instances have been hurried beyond the bounds of moderation, his many virtues, and great services towards establishing christianity on its most enlarged foundation, abundantly atone for such foibles: Indeed the natural keenness and poignancy of his wit, whetted often by cruel and unchristian usage, *must* palliate his severest strokes of satire. Nor will these slight objections depreciate his general reputation, if it be remembered, that in his most social hours, he invariably sustained the united character of the Christian and the Gentleman.

From the influence of his extensive correspondence with some of the wisest and best men in the English nation, that Seminary of learning in which he was educated, received many and considerable donations; and if in him that seat of literature has
not

not lost a weakly benefactor, it is deprived of one who virtually by his influence might have been such, and one who was a sincere friend to that freedom of education which is essentially necessary to the well-being of any academy designed for the education of youth and the benefit of mankind.

In him, *it may be truly said*, his disconsolate widow has lost a kind and affectionate husband, his children a tender and faithful parent, his family a humane and indulgent master ; the poor of *all denominations* a charitable and constant friend ; his church a worthy, learned, social, virtuous and religious pastor ; this continent a resolute and strong defender of its religious independency ; and mankind a bold and nervous assertor of their rights, and that liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.

His Funeral which was attended on Friday last, by all ranks of people of every denomination, was at once a striking instance of that universal esteem he justly merited, and that charity he was himself remarkable for when alive, being in all respects worthy so great and benevolent a character, and as numerous and melancholy a procession as was ever known in this town.

Wrapt in his Arms who bled on Calv'ry's Plain,
We murmur not, blest Shade ! nor dare complain :
Fled to those Seats where perfect Spirits shine,
We mourn our Lot, yet still rejoice in thine ;
Taught by thy Tongue, by thy Example led,
We blest Thee living, and revere Thee dead.
Pass'd from our View, our Eyes no more shall see,
Or Truth, our Ears again receive from Thee ;
Yet long our Hearts, thy Precepts shall retain,
Deep in our Memory thy Love remain ;
Our Care be still in virtuous Deeds to vie,
Our constant Pray'r, like Thee to live and die.

